

For immediate release

Health Care Authority updates hepatitis C policy

More Medicaid clients may now qualify for treatment

Dec. 29, 2014

OLYMPIA – The Health Care Authority (HCA) has issued an interim updated hepatitis C policy that reflects the rapidly changing field of treatment for the chronic disease. The policy will be presented to the Washington State Drug Utilization Board for final approval in February.

There are several key updates in the policy, which applies to Medicaid clients.

- Those infected with hepatitis B or HIV now qualify for hepatitis C treatment if they have moderate liver scarring. In the previous policy, only those with severe liver disease and other specific conditions, including those receiving an organ transplant, qualified for the treatment.
- People with a history of intravenous drug use may be treated right away if they meet the treatment qualifications. In the previous policy, individuals had to have not used IV drugs for the past six months, with few exceptions.
- The policy provides guidance on when it is not appropriate to offer hepatitis C treatment.

HCA began reviewing the hepatitis C policy after a new treatment came on the market in December 2013. Another treatment was approved by the Federal Drug Administration in October.

“The field of hepatitis C treatment is changing rapidly—we needed a more robust policy that reflected current treatment and research and gives the treating provider more information to make decisions,” said HCA Chief Medical Officer Dr. Dan Lessler. “We included experts and advocates in this process, and the policy is stronger as a result.”

Hepatitis C is a virus that can lead to chronic liver disease, including liver damage, cirrhosis, liver failure or liver cancer. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, about 17,000 Americans become infected with hepatitis C each year.

[View the updated policy.](#)

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About Washington State Health Care Authority

HCA oversees the state's top two health care purchasers—Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) and the Public Employee Benefits Board Program. We work with partners to help ensure Washingtonians have access to better health and better care at a lower cost. For more information, visit www.hca.wa.gov.